

- 289 seats are elected from single-seat constituencies.
- 176 seats are allocated through proportional representation within 11 regional blocs.

Voting procedure

Voters in Japan possess two votes:

- **District candidate:** for selecting the representative of their district.
- **Party:** for proportional representation, which allocates seats to parties according to their percentage of votes.

Merit of Mixed System

- Candidates defeated in single-seat constituencies can enter the legislature through party votes in the proportional component.
- “Wasted” votes in the single-seat constituencies can still exert influence in the proportional tier.
- Politicians can adopt diverse campaigning strategies to attract votes both in local constituencies and in the proportional tier.

Practical example

Imagine that candidate A becomes victorious in their district,

Feature	Japan	Iraq
Type of proportional representation	Mixed System (district-based + proportional)	Modified Sainte-Laguë
Lists	Closed and open (candidates within party lists are rankable)	Closed List
Quota seats for women	None (but some parties present balanced lists)	25% of seats reserved
Quota seats for minorities	None (but the division of regional blocs functions similarly)	9 seats reserved
Voting from outside the country	Limited, depending on local law	None

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but candidate B loses by a narrow margin. In the proportional system, if the party of candidate B acquires a sufficient percentage of votes, B can enter the legislature through a proportional seat. In this manner, representation and fairness toward voters increase. Thus, the Japanese experience exemplifies a hybrid approach that seeks to integrate broad representation with political stability. The crucial point is that candidates who are defeated in the single-seat constituencies can enter the legislature through the proportional list. Consequently, “wasted” votes in the single-seat constituencies are still reflected to some extent,

and greater representation from the perspective of voters is created. For example, if two candidates compete in a single-seat district and the defeated candidate is close to the victor; they possess a chance to obtain a proportional seat. This feature allows a significant portion of voters to feel that their opinion has not been disregarded and preserves motivation for electoral participation. Another merit of Japan’s system is that it can maintain a degree of balance between small and large parties because, in the proportional component, seats are allocated according to each party’s percentage of votes. This stands in contrast

with the single-seat method, in which only one candidate becomes victorious, and other votes are effectively unseen. Japan’s Mixed System grants candidates and parties diverse avenues for entering the legislature and prevents the dissipation of votes. The experiences of Iraq and Japan reveal that although the term “proportional representation” may be utilized in both countries, operational design and political conditions exert a substantial influence upon the final outcome. In Iraq, reforms and restrictions caused the proportional system to become an instrument for entrenching established blocs

rather than strengthening representation, whereas in Japan, the combination of single-seat and proportional components endeavors to secure both authentic representation and political stability.

Conclusion

Ultimately, proportional elections constitute an instrument for reflecting the people’s votes into parliamentary seats. However, without transparent laws, independent oversight, and the possibility of participation for all social strata, this instrument can produce the opposite result and concentrate power in the hands of a limited group. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms of proportional elections, including seat calculation, quotas for women and minorities, and methods of vote distribution, possesses great significance. Citizens, through awareness of these mechanisms, can make superior decisions and protect their civic rights. In the end, both experiences demonstrate that proportional elections are, in theory, a powerful instrument for equitable

representation, but in practice, legal design, reforms, and political conditions can alter their effect to the advantage of particular groups. Civic education, electoral transparency, and independent oversight constitute the keys to transforming the proportional system from a theoretical mechanism into an authentic instrument for reflecting the public will. For every society that values democracy, public awareness regarding electoral methods, understanding limitations and advantages, and the capacity for questioning constitute the most important steps for guaranteeing justice and genuine participation in politics. By examining Iraq and Japan, one can discern that the electoral system not only structures political power but also serves as a criterion for assessing the health of democracy and the degree of public participation. Although countries differ, the common lesson is unequivocal: without public awareness, even the most sophisticated electoral systems cannot ensure that the authentic representatives of the people are chosen.

Proportional elections a courageous step along an arduous trajectory



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O P I N I O N

The implementation of city council elections in Tehran on the basis of a proportional system is courageous and facilitative. Yet its success is contingent upon the resolution of several technical and legal issues, the guarantee of financial transparency, and the genuineness of parties and political coalitions. Negligent attention to these subtleties may divert this experiment toward outcomes such as inefficacy or corruption.

Issue of determining threshold

Mere proportionality in elections is insufficient for genuine partitocracy. Global experience indicates that the absence of a “threshold,” or the establishment of a very low threshold, will engender the proliferation of fictitious parties and electoral lists that have no social base. Therefore, it must be determined what percentage of the votes constitutes the condition for a party or list to enter the stage of seat allocation; for instance, there’s the reasonable span of 3 to 8 percent, but it must be determined through simulation, the study of global experiences, and the political circumstances of the country. This threshold delineates the boundary between parties with authentic constituencies and the emergence of ephemeral coalitions.

Allocation of remaining seats

After tabulation, a portion of the votes invariably remains as a fraction of a single seat. For distributing this fraction among lists, numerous methods exist, such as “D’Hondt” or “Sainte-Laguë,” which will produce divergent consequences for representation and political equilibrium. Hence, the precise method and the accepted mathematical formula must be



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determined and inscribed in the bylaws, so that ambiguity, disagreement, and impairment of public trust are forestalled.

Presence of independent candidates

The combination of party lists with independent candidates introduces a new veil of complexity. In many proportional representation systems, competition is predominantly list-based, and the entry of independents renders the calculations for seat allocation arduous and “unprecedented”. A lucid mechanism is required for determining the manner of calculating the share of independents, the relation of individual vote totals with lists, and the hierarchy of priority in allocating seats, so that no technical disputations arise after the announcement of results.

Genuineness of parties, necessity of financial transparency

It is vital that coalitions and parties possess genuineness

and a real social base. The formation of coalitions a few days prior to elections, which are organized solely for financial or media-related purposes, does not contribute to genuine partitocracy and also disarranges the landscape of electoral expenditures. To avert this circumstance, rules of financial transparency and specific restrictions must be established. The following mechanisms may be employed:

- **Mandatory establishment of an electoral account:** Every party, coalition, or candidate shall be obliged to open an electoral account before the elections and to conduct all receipts and expenditures exclusively through that account, which shall be accessible to the Ministry of Interior and the supervisory authority.
- **Restriction of monetary contributions:** A defined ceiling shall be established for financial contributions by natural persons. Monetary contributions outside the banking network

shall be prohibited.

- **Prohibition of legal and corporate contributions:** Private companies, legal entities, and enterprises shall be barred from providing direct payments to parties or coalitions.
- **Perpetual transparency:** Periodic reports of resources and expenditures must be published publicly, and the possibility of independent auditing must be provided.
- **Rational support for small parties:** To reinforce genuine partitocracy, reasonable educational or media resources must be provided for parties with a minimal social base, so that competition does not devolve into financial bargaining.
- **A robust and competent supervisory body:** The establishment or reinforcement of an independent and capable institution for supervising electoral financing and imposing deterrent fines is necessary. The implementation of the proportional representation system in city council elections

can accelerate partitocracy and fortify political institutions. Yet correct advancement is conditional upon the adoption of preliminary technical and legal decisions and the institution of transparent financial rules. It is proposed that the Ministry of Interior (1) determine and, through simulation, announce a rational threshold, (2) publish the formula for allocating remaining seats beforehand, (3) elucidate the mechanism for the presence of independents, and (4) implement the regulations of financial transparency and the independent supervisory authority before the commencement of elections. If these guarantees are instituted, the experience of proportional elections can be transformed into a positive and enduring evolution within the party system. I wish the success of this trial in realizing sustainable popular sovereignty.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language Iran Newspaper.



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